

York St Small Groups

Sermon Based Studies

SUNDAY 16th May 2021

Rhythms of Jesus: Silence and Solitude

Matthew 11:28-30



These studies are designed to be explored after hearing the Sunday sermon and also to be accompanied by a time of prayer/sharing.



To listen to this message again please head to the York St Website or download from iTunes.

Webpage: yorkst.com.au

GETTING STARTED

Q1. Did you or someone you know do an apprenticeship? What did it involve?

Q2. What do you think about the following statement? *Many Christians today think that learning to BE LIKE Jesus is optional. They may believe in Christ and yet have whole areas of their life that he's not part of.*

Q3. Dallas Willard says, *"To experience the Kingdom of God a group of people should get together and simply try to do the things that Jesus instructed his disciples to do."* Have you been part of a group that has intentionally set out to do this? Or is there something stirring within you that finds this idea compelling?

INTO THE WORD - Jesus and the Quiet Place

Q4. Take some time to look up passages that show that the quiet place was priority for Jesus. Below are some suggestions...there will be others too that you can find.

Matthew 14:13

Matthew 15:29

Mark 1:35

Mark 6:31-32

Mark 6:45

Luke 5:16

Luke 6:12

Have a look at the contexts around these verses. What happened before and after them? Why do you think the quiet place was so important to Jesus? What happened in that space for him?

FURTHER DISCUSSION

Q5. How does the invitation to enter into the practice of Silence and Solitude make you feel? Is there anything that would stop you from trying this practice?

Q6. What is the most compelling reason for you to enter into Silence and Solitude?

Q7. Ruth Haley Barton in her book *Invitation to Silence and Solitude*, suggests that the willingness to see ourselves as we are, and to name it in God's presence is at the very heart of the spiritual journey. She reminds us that young children who have been well cared for have an instinctual trust in the unconditional acceptance of those who love them, and so they are able to let down and relax when they need to. They don't yet know how to put on airs. They don't try to make things look better than they are. They haven't yet learned how to hold back their squeals of delight, their expressions of need or desire, their tears of sadness and pain. Children seem to be uninhibited about expressing whatever is true of them in the present moment. Sometimes it's cute and adorable; often it is less so. But part of being a child is being relaxed and at home with yourself, with the people around you, with life itself. She encourages us to be like this with God.

Do you feel safe enough with yourself, and with God to be able to sit with him like this...naming what is real about you in that moment?

Q8. Choose one of these quotes to discuss (groups) or ponder.

Quote 1 - "Today, a number of historical circumstances are blindly flowing together and accidentally conspiring to produce a climate within which is difficult not just to think about God or to pray, but simply to have any interior depth whatsoever....We, for every kind of reason, good and bad, are distracting ourselves into spiritual oblivion. It is not that we have anything against God, depth and spirit, we would like these, it is just that we are habitually too preoccupied to have any of these show up on our radar screens. We are more busy than bad, more distracted than non-spiritual, and more interested in the movie theatre, the sports stadium, the shopping mall and the fantasy life they produce in us, than we are in the church. Pathological busyness, distraction, and restlessness are major blocks today within our spiritual lives. (Ronald Rolheiser)

Quote 2 - "In the chronic problem of human being's felt experience of distance from God, God isn't usually the culprit. God is omnipresent – there is no place God is not. And no time he isn't present either. Our awareness of God is the problem, and it's acute. So many people live without a sense of God's presence through the day...But could it be that, with a few said exceptions, we're the ones who are absent, not God? We sit around sucked into our phones, or TV, or to-do lists, oblivious to the God who is around us, with us, in us, even more desirous than we are for relationship." (John Mark Comer)

Q9. As you look at your own rhythms of life, is there scope for expressing your love for Jesus more fully, more deeply, more passionately, more intentionally? Could you integrate your desire to follow Christ more completely into your daily/weekly/monthly routine?

Q10. What practical arrangements would you need to make in your own life to begin creating space for practicing solitude and silence this week?

HAVING A GO AT SILENCE...either with your group or by yourself.

- Come to this with an open mind. You may find you actually love this!
- Establish a sacred space if you can – this includes a time and a place set apart to give God your undivided attention.
- Decide ahead of time how much time you will spend in silence, especially if this is new to you. Start with a modest goal. You may find it helpful to set a timer so you don't keep looking at your watch!
- Sit in a comfortable position – you don't want to be distracted by discomfort, or fall asleep!
- Ask for a simple prayer that expresses your openness and desire for God – for example, “Here I am...something you can come back to if you get distracted.
- As you sit quietly, give yourself time to notice what is true about you. Invite God into that moment by saying something like, “God, this is what is true about me. What are we going to do about this?” Allow yourself to become fully aware of God loving you and extending compassion to you in these moments.
- As you emerge from the silence, resist the urge to judge your experience. Like...I didn't get anything out of it. God didn't speak to me. I'm awful at this. Remember the purpose is just to be with God.
- Extend yourself loads of grace. Learning anything new feels awkward at first!
- Have loads of patience. There will be some questions that you're not ready to hear the answers to yet. So be patient with him, and trust his kindness and goodness towards you.

Q8. Finishing your group time

Take a few moments in silence to reflect on what you have shared and received. Experience your gratitude for what God has done in each individual's life and also in the sharing that has taken place. Listen for any encouragement, instruction, guidance or invitation that the Holy Spirit is impressing on your heart, and claim what you want to take with you into the next week.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO PRESS INTO THIS FURTHER?

Ruth Haley Barton's book “Invitation to Solitude and Silence” journeys through the story of Elijah, to invite us into the practice of Silence and Solitude. At the end of each chapter, there is a step-by-step guide that helps you take the next baby step with this practice.

There is also a study guide at the back for small groups. It would be a brilliant 12 week study for your group, or you could journey through it personally if you don't have a group interested.